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THE PRESS AND THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

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The influence of the American press, particularly the sensational newspapers, in leading the United States into a war with Spain has received only brief consideration from historians. In discussing the causes of the Spanish-American war, they have referred to the policy of the Hearst papers without stressing the influence of these or other publications on the press of the country at large. To state that the "yellow journals" favored the Cuban insurgents is to tell only a part of the story. These newspapers alone could not have brought about a general demand for war with Spain, but their activity in exploiting the Cuban revolt and in selling their news services to other papers, as well as their influence on news gathering associations, gave newspaper readers throughout the country partisan accounts of the Cuban insurrection.

In a study of the influence of the press in causing a break with Spain, it is necssary to understand the news connections of the various newspapers actively engaged in presenting reports of the insurrection. At the outbreak of the Cuban revolt there were in the United States two large news-gathering associations, the Western Associated Press and the United Press (old), and several smaller ones of which all of the larger newspapers were members.[1] For several years there had been

[1] Melville E. Stone, "The Associated Press" in *Century Magazine*, XLVIII, June 1905, p. 306. The United Press of that time was in no sense connected historically to the United Press of the present day.

much rivalry between the Western Associated Press and the United Press, and by 1895 this feeling had grown intense. After the former arranged an alliance with Reuter's Agency, a European news-gathering association, the United Press declined in prestige, and in 1897 it became insolvent and passed out of existence,[2] after which most of its members joined the Associated Press.[3] Thus in 1895, most of the daily newspapers held membership in one of the several news-gathering organizations, and after 1897, the majority of the daily newspapers of the country were members of the Associated Press.[4]

Newspaper propaganda for the Cuban insurgents centered about several large New York newspapers. Both the *World* and *Journal* sent their best correspondents and artists to the island.[5] The *Sun* and *Herald* also had special writers in Cuba. These publications sold their news services, including pictures, to papers in all parts of the country. The Chicago *Tribune* used the New York *World* service,[6] and also the New York *Journal* syndicate service.[7] The Boston *Herald*[8] and the Chicago *Times-Herald* used the New York *Herald* service,[9] and the San Francisco *Chronicle* used both the New York *Herald* and the *Sun* services.[10] The San Francisco *Examiner*, a Hearst paper, used the same news service as the New York *Journal*. The Milwaukee *Sentinel* obtained its news of the Cuban revolution from the Washington *Post*,[11] while the New

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 307.

[3] It was not until 1900, however, that the present Associated Press was organized.

[4] *"M. E. S." His Book — A Tribute and a Souvenir to the Twenty-five Years, 1893–1918, of the Service of Melville E. Stone as General Manager of the Associated Press* (New York, 1928), p. 32.

[5] Chicago *Tribune*, Feb. 6, 1897, p. 1.

[6] *Ibid.*, March 3, 1896, p. 2.

[7] *Ibid.*, Feb. 21, 1897, p. 1.

[8] Boston *Herald*, April 18, 1897, p. 1.

[9] Chicago *Times-Herald*, April 26, 1898, p. 6.

[10] San Francisco *Chronicle*, May 11, 1896, p. 1.

[11] Milwaukee *Sentinel*, April 12, 1898, p. 2.

Orleans *Times-Democrat*, during the early part of the revolt, had its own correspondent in Havana,[12] and later it used the New York *Sun* news service.[13] Most of these newspapers after 1897 also used the Associated Press reports.[14]

The invasion of Cuba by New York newspapers led the Associated Press to maintain a staff of men at strategic centers on the island, and news was "smuggled out by the A. P. correspondents at the imminent risk of being shot for their pains."[15] According to their by-laws, press associations had the right to use news matter secured by member papers, and the Associated Press frequently exercised this right by transmitting news stories taken from dispatches written by special correspondents in Cuba.[16]

Throughout the period of the Cuban insurrection there was much rivalry among the newspapers in the large centers. Especially was the competition bitter between the *World* and *Journal*. The contest between these two had developed into a fight for supremacy in the field of New York journalism between Joseph Pulitzer and W. R. Hearst. On the Pacific coast, the San Francisco *Examiner* was setting the pace in giving striking display to news which the *Chronicle* was striving to follow.[18] The practice of the *World* and *Journal* in rushing special editions on early trains to Boston was causing grave concern to the Boston *Herald*.[19] These two New York newspapers, with their sensational display of news of the Cuban re-

[12] New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, March 3, 1895, p. 1. The *Times-Democrat* was merged with the New Orleans *Picayune* in 1914, the result of the merger being the present *Times-Picayune*.

[13] *Ibid.*, Feb. 9, 1898, p. 1.

[14] *Associated Press Reports*, 1895, pp. 44–55; 1897, pp.38–47.

[15] "*M. E. S.*" *His Book, Op. Cit.*, pp. 159–160.

[16] *Cf.* New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, May 11, 1896, p. 1; *Ibid.*, Feb. 2, 1897, p. 2; *Ibid.*, Feb. 8, 1897, p. 2; Indianapolis *Journal*, Feb. 6, 1897, p. 5.

[17] Don C. Seitz, *Joseph Pulitzer—His Life and Letters* (New York, 1924), p. 215.

[18] San Francisco *Chronicle*, May 18, 1896, p. 6.

[19] Boston *Herald*, March 3, 1898, p. 6.

volt, were evidently making inroads into the *Herald* circulation. There was also a fight for circulation in Chicago between the *Tribune* and the *Times-Herald*.[20] During this period many innovations in news-gathering were introduced.[21]

The Spanish authorities, soon after the outbreak of the insurrection, placed a strict censorship over all news emanating from Cuba, and the correspondents had a difficult time getting reports of the insurrection.[22] The revolt was confined in its earlier stages to the western half of the island, which was almost inaccessible to journalists. Much of the fighting was carried on by small bands in guerilla fashion, and this aggravated the natural difficulty of getting accurate accounts of battles or other news.[23]

To complicate the problems of correspondents in obtaining news, Spanish authorities restricted the passage of reporters beyond the lines of the Spanish troops and forbade communication with the enemy, thus cutting off whatever connection that might have been maintained openly with insurgent bands.[24] It was charged that many of the correspondents established headquarters at Key West, where they wrote "news" dispatches based on rumors and unconfirmed reports received from the Cuban junta.[25] Some of the reporters, however, claimed to have kept up communication with the insurgents by secret means.

This restriction of news caused much friction between newspaper correspondents and the Spanish military authorities and contributed materially to the stirring up of opposition in the United States against the Spaniards. Naturally the correspondents objected to having their dispatches censored, and

[20] Chicago *Times-Herald*, Jan 25, 1898, p. 6.

[21] Walter L. Hawley, "Development of the American Newspapers" in *Popular Science Monthly*, LVI, December, 1899, p. 203.

[22] New York *Times*, March 6, 1895, p. 5.

[23] *Ibid.*, July 4, 1895, p. 5.

[24] New York *World*, Feb. 17, 1896, p. 1.

[25] Chicago *Times-Herald*, Feb. 19, 1896, p. 6.

they envaded the censorship order whenever they could.[26] In doing so they had to smuggle their news aboard vessels bound for Key West to be transmitted to their papers by telegraph.

But the problem of passing the Spanish lines was not so easily solved. One reason for Spain's refusal to allow American journalists free passage through their lines was the fear that the correspondents were negotiating the sale of arms and ammunition to the rebels.[27] An efficient patrol was maintained by the Spaniards, and correspondents found it hard to pass the soldiers. Some of the bolder journalists attempted to establish communication with the insurgents, among whom was a Florida correspondent who succeeded in passing the patrols, but was later captured and executed.[28] Another was Sylvester Scovel, of the *World*.[29] Scovel was imprisoned, and for days his case was presented to the American public through press and from platform, in legislative hall and in the school room as exemplifying martydom to the cause of freedom of speech and the press.[30] During his imprisonment, Scovel continued to write for the *World*, smuggling out his news stories each day, and the *World's* circulation increased more than 8,000 during his confinement.[31] He was later released. Two other *World* correspondents, James Creelman and W. W. Gay, were expelled from Cuba for "telling the truth about Weyler."[32] Frederick W. Lawrence, correspondent for the New York *Journal*, was expelled with Creelman, and Thomas Robinson Hawley, Jr., artist for a New York newspaper, was imprisoned for the eighth time within one month for attempting

[26] *"M. E. S." His Book, Op. Cit.*, pp. 159–160.

[27] New York *Times*, May 6, 1895, p. 5.

[28] *World*, Jan 7, 1897, p. 7.

[29] *Ibid.*, Feb. 7, 1897, p. 1.

[30] *Cf. World*, January-February, 1897; *Times-Democrat*, Feb. 8, 1897, p. 2; Chicago *Tribune*, Feb. 7, 1897, p. 1; Indianapolis *Journal*, Feb. 20, 1897, p. 6; *Congressional Record*, 54th Congress, 2nd Session, XXIX, Pt. 2, p. 1762, Feb. 12, 1897.

[31] *World*, Feb. 20, 1897, p. 1.

[32] *Ibid.*, May 7, 1896, p. 1; June 26, 1896, p. 7.

to send out pictures of the Cuban revolt. Later, another *Journal* correspondent and a reporter for the New York *Sun* were driven out of Cuba.[83]

Another case of the arrest of a Cuban correspondent that caused nation-wide comment was that of Ona Melton, a Jacksonville, Florida, correspondent, who had been arrested aboard a filibustering vessel, tried with four others by court-martial, and sentenced to be shot. His execution was delayed, however, pending a new trial; and for months he lay in prison awaiting disposition of his case, during which time he smuggled dispatches to both the *World* and *Journal*.[84] Despite the expulsion of correspondents from Cuba, the New York papers continued to receive full reports of the rebellion.[85]

This controversy between the newspapers and Spanish authorities over the rights of correspondents continued during the period of the revolt, with the former contending that its representatives should be unmolested and unrestricted in the gathering of news in Cuba, and the latter insisting upon exercising strict control over the movements of the newspapermen and the dispatches they sent out. It can be seen, therefore, how a few aggressive papers made available to the coöperative news-gathering associations, through their special Cuban correspondents, news articles dealing with the activites of the insurgents, which were in turn transmitted to every section of the United States. Through the persistence of these correspondents in seeking news in violation of Spanish orders, the Cuban question was further agitated in this country and the Spanish government presented in the light of infringing upon the inalienable rights of American citizens. Thus was the groundwork laid for an effective campaign for the Cuban cause.

The fitting out of filibustering expeditons in United States waters for the aid of the Cuban insurgents, which had been

[83] New York *Journal*, Aug. 3, 1897, p. 2.

[84] *Cf. Journal*, April, 1897.

[85] *Cf. World*, *Journal*, *Sun*, and *Herald*, November-December, 1897.

carried on with every Cuban revolt since 1823 in violation of the neutrality laws of this country, raised one of the most serious controversies between this government and Spain that came up during the rebellion. Before the outbreak of the revolution, influential Cuban leaders had organized in this country the "junta," a group composed of naturalized and unnaturalized Cubans and Cuban sympathizers, the chief purpose of which was to promote the fitting out of filibustering expeditions.[36] In the early part of the revolt, filibustering ships sailed openly, but upon repeated complaints from Spain, United States authorities made serious efforts to prevent such expeditions from leaving American ports and to effect their capture if they succeeded in escaping. On the whole, this country was fairly successful in stopping filibustering expeditions, the activities of which the newspapers undoubtedly exaggerated.

The action of the Spanish government in attempting to stop filibusterers resulted in sharp diplomatic controversies with this country, which were aggravated by the manner in which the news reports were handled by a large part of the American press. One of the first and most serious instances of this kind was the *Allianca* affair. The *Allianca* was a United States steamship which on its homeward voyage from Colon to New York, when several miles from the coast of Cuba, off Cape Maysi, was signalled to "heave to" by the Spanish gunboat *Conde De Venadito*. The American vessel refused to halt, whereupon the Spanish ship gave chase and then fired upon the *Allianca*. The Spanish authorities claimed that the *Allianca* was in the act of transferring munitions of war to fishing vessels to be transported to the Cuban shore for use by the insurgents, but this charge was denied by the captain of the *Allianca*.[37] The State Department held that the Windward Passage, where the incident occurred, was the neutral high-

[36] *Cf.* Elbert J. Benton, *International Law and Diplomacy of the Spanish American War* (Baltimore, 1908).

[37] *World*, March 13, 1895, p. 1.

way for vessels plying between ports of the United States and the Caribbean sea, and that forcible intervention with them could not be claimed as a belligerent act, whether or not they passed within three miles of the Cuban coast, and could under no circumstances be tolerated when no state of war existed.[38] The point at issue was a complicated one. Under the rules of international law, Spain had no legal right of visitation and search upon the high seas, inasmuch as she had not recognized that a state of war existed in Cuba.[39] A note was dispatched to Madrid asking for a full explanation of the conduct of the Spanish captain.

Meanwhile, American newspapers in every section of the country came out with the striking headline, "Our Flag Fired On." While negotiations were being conducted between the two countries with the view of peacefully settling the controversy, the partisan press carried columns of news dispatches and editorial matter concerning the event, quoting prominent public men as stating that Spain had insulted "Old Glory," and sharply criticized President Cleveland for his alleged failure to take drastic action against Spain.[40] The controversy was finally settled to the satisfaction of the United States after much bitterness toward Spain had been expressed by the press.

The second serious incident arising out of filibustering activities, which aroused the indignation of the American press and for a time caused strained diplomatic relations between Spain and this country, was the *Competitor* affair. The *Competitor* was a small schooner operating between the

[38] *Foreign Relations*, 1895, pp. 11, 1177; Gresham, Secretary of State, to Taylor, Minister to Spain, March 14, 1895.

[39] John Bassett Moore, *A Digest of International Law* (Washington, 1906), II, Section 309, pp. 889–890 ff.

[40] *Cf.* New York *Sun*, March 14–24, 1895, p. 1; Chicago *Tribune*, March 16, 1895, p. 12; Milwaukee *Sentinel*, March 16, 1895, p. 4; San Francisco *Chronicle*, March 14, 1895, p. 6; Indianapolis *Journal*, March 13, 1895, p. 5; Cincinnati *Commercial-Gazette*, March 13, 1895, p. 1; Chicago *Times-Herald*, March 19, 1895, p. 5; Boston *Herald*, March 19, 1895, p. 1; New York *Herald*, March 16, 1895, p. 3; New York *Times*, March 13, 1895, p. 4.

United States and Cuba. It was captured either on the high seas or within the three-mile zone of Cuba and its crew of five men taken prisoners, tried by court-martial, and sentenced to be shot.[41] Two of the prisoners, including Ona Melton, were Americans and one was an Englishman. Immediately a strong protest came from the newspapers against the method by which the men were tried and the sentence imposed. Unsustained charges that Spain had defied this country, that the trial was a farce, and that when the *Competitor* was captured the American flag was fired upon repeatedly were made by partisan newspapers. After remaining in prison for more than eighteen months, the *Competitor* crew were pardoned by the Queen Regent of Spain, and this issue, which had been agitated for months, came to a peaceful end. Spain was apparently doing all she could to remove grounds for irritation on the part of the United States. While the case of the *Competitor* crew was pending, there were other filibustering expeditions which precipitated controversies.

Filibustering activities from the beginning of the Cuban revolt furnished the partisian press with opportunities for keeping the insurrection before the public and for making bitter attacks against Spanish policy. The *Allianca* affair was the first of a series of incidents which stirred the indignation of the press throughout the country and again brought up the old question of the purchase or annexation of Cuba.[42] These expeditions also brought about serious diplomatic entanglements between this government and Spain and obviously contributed materially toward causing strained relations between the two countries.

Although the controversies arising out of filibustering expeditions offered many opportunities for the partisan press to create ill feeling toward Spain, it was not until Captain-General Valierono Weyler inaugurated his *reconcentrado* policy in Cuba that sensational newspapers were able to stir up bitter

[41] Chicago *Tribune*, May 12, 1896, p. 6.

[42] Chicago *Times-Herald*, March 16, 1895, p. 5.

opposition to Spanish rule in the island. Weyler was not unknown to the American public. He had served Spain in previous revolts and had gained the reputation of being "the most brutal and heartless soldier to be found in a supposedly civilized country."[43]

Before Weyler arrived in Cuba, it was freely predicted that he would "cause the island to flow with gore." He was referred to as the modern imitator of Cortez, the slayer of defenseless women and children. This conviction on the part of the press was strenghtened when a dispatch from Madrid announced that the new military leader would adopt a much more drastic policy in dealing with the revolt than his predecessor had followed. In view of the fact that the press generally had been critical of the Spanish policy under General Campos, whom Weyler succeeded, the announcement of the new appointment might have been expected to cause general alarm among Cuban sympathizers.

Weyler issued his famous order in February, 1896, requiring the people of Cuba to concentrate about military headquarters maintained over that area controlled by the Spaniards. There was to be no traveling without passes, the commercial establishments of the island were to be at the disposal of the commanders, and the population was to be completely under the control of the military department. This order virtually placed under arrest the population of entire districts. It was asserted that Weyler proposed to convert the war into barbaric butchery, denying to his opponents the rights that all civilized nations accord to armed insurgents everywhere.[44] With the partisan press assuming such an attitude regarding Weyler even before his program was well under way, it is not surprising that opposition increased as time passed.

By the time Weyler began his *reconcentrado* program, four New York newspapers — the *World*, *Sun*, *Journal*, and *Her-*

[43] *Ibid.*, Jan. 20, 1896, p. 6.

[44] New York *World*, March 2, 1896, p. 6.

ald — had correspondents on the island. In addition, the Washington *Post* and the New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, and several Florida papers were maintaining reporters in Cuba. *World* and *Journal* artists accompanied their correspondents to make sketches for use in connection with the day's news. From this corps of newspapermen a continual stream of atrocity stories flowed, the nature of which grew more sensational as Weyler's policy began to cause suffering among the peasants huddled in the military camps. Weyler's plan was to bring the loyal people together so that all those found outside the camps might be dealt with summarily. Both Spaniards and rebels now began a systematic campaign of destruction. Fields were laid waste, livestock driven off, and plantation houses and sugar mills were burned. Soon, food in the military camps of the interior became scarce, and suffering was intense. The newspaper correspondents made the most of their opportunities. Pushing into the interior, if they were successful in evading Spanish patrols, the reporters wrote articles dealing with atrocities and suffering among the Cubans, while artists sketched pictures intended to give visible proof of conditions supposedly obtained from observation. When correspondents failed to reach farther than Havana, news articles and pen sketches continued to be sent out daily, depicting "actual" scenes in the *reconcentrado* camps. These dispatches the press claimed, were smuggled aboard vessels bound for Key West, whence they were transmitted by telegraph to the newspapers.

The most persistent of the New York newspapers in obtaining atrocity stories during 1896 was Pulitzer's *World*; after 1896, the *World* and *Journal* were engaged in bitter rivalry in their struggle for Cuban news. Following the lead of these two papers, the partisan press continued the publication of atrocity stories throughout the period of Weyler's rule in Cuba, which lasted until the fall of 1897. As the leaks in Weyler's censorship became apparent to the Spaniards, there was a general tightening up of restrictions, and finally most of

the correspondents were expelled from the island, after which they were obliged to pick up their stories as best they could. Taking into account the difficulty encountered by the reporters, both in obtaining news and in sending it out, it seems reasonable to assume that there were good grounds for the charges made by conservative newspaper editors that many of the correspondents wrote their "news" dispatches at Key West, where abundant Cuban propaganda could be obtained from the junta.[45]

The effects of newspaper reports of Cuban "oppression" on the American people can be seen through the activities of the public, as well as Congress, in behalf of the Cubans. Such activities included the holding of mass meetings to aid the insurgents, the raising of money, enlistments in the Cuban army, and petitions and memorials to legislative bodies asking for American intervention in the island. Partisan members of Congress frequently referred to newspaper accounts of Cuban "oppression" in debates dealing with measures designed to aid the rebels.[46]

From the beginning of the rebellion the partisan press had urged recognition of the belligerency of the insurgents, though what benefits were to be derived from such recognition the newspapers were not clear in explaining. As a matter of fact, a recognition of belligerency not only would not have aided the Cubans, but actually would have benefited Spain.[47] The newspapers seemed to assume, however, that recognition by the United States would be a definite move in the direction of the independence of the island, and when President Cleveland declined to be influenced by the action of Congress, particularly of the Senate, which had repeatedly voted on resolutions ask-

[45] *Cf.* Chicago *Times-Herald*, Feb. 19, 1898, p. 6; New York *Evening Post*, March 28, 1898, p. 6; New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, Feb. 18, 1898, p. 6.

[46] *Cf. Cong. Rec.*, 54 Cong., 2 Sess., XXIX, Pt. 2, p. 1157, Jan. 26, 1897; 55 Cong., 2 Sess., XXXI, Pt. 2, pp. 1574, 1578, Feb. 9, 1898; 55 Cong., 2 Sess., XXXI, Pt. 2, p. 1874, Feb. 18, 1898.

[47] *Cf.* John Bassett Moore, "Cuban Belligerency" in *The Forum*, XXI, May, 1896, pp. 288–300 ff.

ing for Cuban belligerency, much sharp criticism was directed against him by the press.

The introduction in Congress of each resolution dealing with Cuban belligerency was the occasion for much debate in both houses, which was fully reported and commented upon by partisan newspapers.[48] Senators and representatives, seemingly moved by the atrocity stories found in the press, made stirring speeches in favor of Cuban belligerency, using portions of the news reports from Cuba, and the partisan newspapers reported these speeches, repeating much of what they had previously used.[49] In this way the public was given a double portion of Spanish atrocity stories.[50] The number of resolutions introduced in Congress dealing with Cuba and the speeches resulting from the introduction of such measures increased with the number of atrocity stories carried by the press. The same newspapers that were active in obtaining atrocity stories were most critical of President Cleveland for his failure to take some action toward aiding the insurgents.

Several of the newspapers, notably the Chicago *Tribune*, the New York *World* and the New York *Journal*, conducted polls of members of Congress, governors of states, and other public officials to determine their attitude on the Cuban question and then with prominent display gave the results. Frequently, only a relatively small number of favorable replies were published but these apparently convinced the editors that public sentiment strongly favored the cause of the insurgents.

The controversy centering about recognition of Cuban belligerency led to violent protests in Spain, particularly among university students, who, on more than one occasion, stoned the

[48] *Cf.* Chicago *Tribune*, New York *World*, New York *Journal*, New York *Sun*, and San Francisco *Chronicle* for December, 1896, January and February, 1897.

[49] *Cf. World*, *Journal*, Chicago *Tribune*, and San Francisco *Chronicle* for December, 1896, January and February, 1897.

[50] It was during the latter half of 1896 and the first half of 1897 that the press carried so many atrocity stories. During this same period, some twenty-five resolutions dealing with Cuba were introduced in Congress.

American consulate at Barcelona. Such outbursts of indignation were interpreted by sensational newspapers as meaning that Spain was eager for war with this country. These also presented an opportunity for the announcement of preparations of war and the publication of pictures of the American fleet. The reports coming from Spain were written by special correspondents maintained by several newspapers at Madrid whose news dispatches were included in the regular service furnished other papers. In fact, Madrid proved to be almost as good a news source as Cuba itself.

Many deceptive arguments were used by partisan newspapers in contending for recogniton of belligerency, indicating that the editors either did not understand the implications of the term or else were purposely misrepresenting facts to the American public. When it became evident that Cleveland would not act, Congress, backed by a group of strong newspapers, tried to force him to recognize the Cubans by threatening to pass a joint resolution providing for recognition over a veto should the measure be disapproved by the President. The matter was not dropped until Secretary of State Olney announced that the President would not recognize Cuban belligerency even though such a resolution were passed over his veto. This agitation for Cuban recogniton was continued, in a more or less persistent manner, until the *Maine* disaster in February, 1898, after which events moved rapidly toward war with Spain.

The year 1897 marks definitely the beginning of what the New York *Journal* referred to as the "New Journalism" — a policy of aggressive activity in bringing to light unusual incidents, which were exploited in a manner calculated to build circulation. The *Journal* referred to its accomplishments in digging up news as the "journalism that does things" and poked fun at its competitors for their lack of initiative.[51] The influence of the Hearst paper on other newspapers is indicated by the way in which they "played up" news reports uncovered

[51] New York *Journal*, Oct. 13, 1897, p. 8.

by the *Journal*. A series of news events occured during 1897 and early 1898, for which the *Journal* was either wholly or partly responsible, that obviously played a significant part in arousing public feeling against Spain. These were the Ruiz affair, the Cisneros rescue, and the De Lome letter.

Ruiz was one of the many Cubans who had come to the United States, taken out naturalization papers, and returned to Cuba to live. Following his arrest on a charge of participating in a train robbery, he was found dead in his prison cell. The *Journal* charged that the "American" had been murdered, and for several days it carried news dispatches, prominently displayed, concerning the affair. The Hearst paper demanded protection for American citizens and quoted Secretary of State Sherman as favoring war with Spain for "murdering Americans." Other papers took up the demand for protection of American citizens, while action was taken by the Senate looking toward an investigation surrounding the arrest, imprisonment, and death of Ruiz. After the press ceased agitating the question, however, the matter was dropped without decisive action being taken by Congress.

The Cisneros rescue is perhaps one of the most notable instances of newspaper aggressiveness in journalistic history. Evangelina Cisneros, a niece of the Cuban president, was arrested on a charge of having plotted the murder of a Spanish officer, convicted of sedition by a Spanish court martial, and threatened with being sent to Spain's African penal settlement. The Hearst paper championed her cause, and after securing the signatures of thousands of prominent women throughout the country to a petition to the Queen Regent of Spain asking for her release, effected her escape from prison in Havana, brought her safely to New York City, and for several weeks exploited the event. Other newspapers published accounts of the daring rescue, and the Associated Press carried full reports of the event. Karl Decker, the *Journal* correspondent who rescued the young woman, was referred to as a "national hero."

Closely following the Cisneros rescue, an incident occured that directly affected diplomatic relations between the United States and Spain and probably contributed more than any single event, prior to the sinking of the battleship *Maine*, toward causing bitter feeling against Spain. The episode was the publication by the *Journal* of the De Lome letter, written by Dupuy De Lome, Spanish minister at Washington, to Jose Canalejas y Mendez, editor of *El Heraldo de Madrid*, in which the Spanish minister referred to President McKinley as a "low politician catering to the rabble."[52] The letter was addressed to Canalejas at Havana, where he was on a mission for Spain, and was stolen, apparently by a member of the Cuban junta, and given to the *Journal*, which devoted all of its front page and more to the incident. It was another *Journal* "scoop." Scenting war in the De Lome episode, the Hearst paper began playing up a war scare with banner headlines.

As on previous occasions, other newspapers followed the example of the *Journal*, and even the pulpit took up the incident.[53] The matter was settled when Spain apologized for the statement after the minister had resigned his office.

These three incidents, for which the sensational press was almost entirely responsible, were agitated at a time when relations between the United States and Spain were growing more strained each day and provided the proper psychological setting for the climax to the demand for American intervention in Cuba, which was forthcoming in the *Maine* disaster.

The *Maine* explosion may be said to have been the immediate cause of the war with Spain. For approximately three years partisan newspapers in this country had campaigned vigorously for the insurgents' cause, but prior to the *Maine* explosion their news, while arousing sympathy for the Cubans, was lacking in those elements necessary to crystallize American sentiment in favor of war with Spain. For some time a part of the American public had indicated its opposition to Spain,

[52] *Ibid.*, Feb. 9, 1898, p. 1.

[53] *Ibid.*, Feb. 14, 1898, p. 2.

but the spark needed to explode their pent up feelings against Spanish "oppression" had failed to materialize. This spark was furnished in the *Maine* disaster.

The *Maine* disaster also furnished the occasion for sensational newspapers to recapitulate their demands for a cessation of the rebellion in Cuba and for Cuban independence. The mystery surrounding the catastrophe, which sent two hundred sixty-six seamen to their death, and the suspicion of Spanish treachery furnished the basis for many groundless rumors and speculations as to the cause of the explosion, which were used by several newspapers, particularly the *World* and the *Journal*, in inflaming the minds of the people.[54] That many of the news reports concerning the disaster and the subsequent developments were based on rumors or "faked" is indicated by the severe criticsms made against "yellow journals" by conservative newspapers of that period and by later authors. Particularly caustic in their criticism of "yellow journals" were the New York *Evening Post* and the *Nation*, of which E. L. Godkin was editor.[55] Referring to the influence of the press on diplomatic negotiations, Godkin asserted that newspapers frequently advocated war because "they have to maintain their place in the estimation of their readers, and, if possible, to increase the number of these readers."[56]

The *Nation* asserted that many of the "news" reports of evidence uncovered following the *Maine* disaster were nothing more then "fakes."[57] Both the Indianapolis *Journal* and the San Francisco *Chronicle* held up to ridicule the "faking" of "yellow journals," particularly with respect to their stories of the *Maine* explosion,[58] and the Milwaukee *Sentinel* criticized

[54] Chicago *Times-Herald*, Feb. 19, 1898, p. 2.

[55] *Cf.* The *Nation*, LXVI, March 3, 1898, p. 157; *Ibid.*, March 10, 1898, p. 175; *Evening Post*, March 17, 1898, p. 6; *Ibid.*, March 21, 1898, pp. 6–7; *Ibid.*, March 28, 1898, p. 6.

[56] E. L. Godkin, "The Growth and Expansion of Public Opinion" in the *Atlantic Monthly*, LXXXI, January, 1898, p. 9.

[57] *The Nation*, LXVI, May 5, 1898, p. 334.

[58] Indianapolis *Journal*, Feb. 26, 1898, p. 4; San Francisco *Chronicle*, Feb. 18, 1898, p. 4.

the New York *World*, Chicago *Tribune*, and the Chicago *Times-Herald* for their alleged practice of "yellow journalism."[59]

Quite as denunciatory of sensational newspapers as Godkin was Walter Wellman, correspondent for the Chicago *Times-Herald*.[60] Discussing newspaper "fakes," Wellman stated that Key West almost since the beginning of hostilities in Cuba had been "not the seat of war, but of war correspondents":[61]

> Much of the excitement that the people of the United States have manifested over the Cuban affairs has resulted from special dispatches sent out from Key West by correspondents of sensational newspapers. . . .
>
> Subsequent events disproved nearly every sensational story sent out from Key West, but there seems to have been no abatement in the pernicious activity of the writers who rely upon their imaginations for "news."

The New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, in asserting that many of the news reports concerning the *Maine* disaster were unreliable, said that on all such occasions "fervid imaginations come into play where facts are unobtainable; and often it is difficult to know where fancy ends and fact begins."[62] The *Times-Democrat* charged that the Associated Press correspondent had contributed his quota of fiction to the discoveries reported after the *Maine* disaster.[63]

Criticizing the "irresponsible and reckless" manner in which "certain New York papers" had conducted their policies with regard to the *Maine* explosion, the Boston *Herald*, which was not above reproach in this respect, as the files for this period show, stated that these papers had become "notorious for furnishing fake news."[64] The trouble with the Cuban dispatches,

[59] Milwaukee *Sentinel*, April 18, 1898, p. 4.

[60] *Times-Herald*, Feb. 19, 1898, p. 2.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[62] *Times-Democrat*, Feb. 18, 1898, p. 4.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[64] Boston *Herald*, March 4, 1898, p. 6.

the *Herald* said, was that "both sides seem to indulge in the tallest kind of lying."[65]

Obviously, many of the newspapers unsuspectingly carried unreliable news dispatches. Some of the papers, while publishing these false reports, denounced in editorials such exaggerated news articles. It is improbable, however, that occasional editorial denouncements of sensational practices were sufficient to neutralize the effect of the daily display of dispatches concerning Spanish atrocities.

Both Pulitzer and Hearst strongly favored the cause of the Cubans — the former because the issue of liberty was involved; he was engaged in bitter rivalry with Hearst; and besides he "rather liked the idea of war — not a big one — but one that would arouse interest and give him a chance to guage the reflex in his circulation figures."[66] Hearst was equally interested in his circulation figures, and welcomed the "sporadic outbursts of groups of patriots in Cuba who were agitating for freedom from Spanish rule."[67] The circulation of both papers grew rapidly during the period of the Cuban insurrection. At the beginning of 1895, the circulation of Pulitzer's paper was less than 400,000;[68] by April, 1896, the combined circulation of the *Morning World* and *Evening World* had reached 742,673 a day;[69] and early in 1898, it totaled 822,804.[70] At the time the *Evening Journal* was started in connection with the *Morning Journal*, Sept. 28, 1896, Hearst claimed a circulation of 407,000, making it the largest morning paper in the country.[71] In early November of the same year, the *Journal* stated that its combined circulation was

[65] *Ibid.*, July 28, 1896, p. 12.

[66] Seitz, *Op. Cit.*, p. 238.

[67] John K. Winkler, *W. R. Hearst — An American Phenomenon* (New York, 1928), p. 143.

[68] *World*, June 14, 1896, p. 6.

[69] *Ibid.*, May 1, 1896, p. 1.

[70] *Ibid.*, April 3, 1898, p. 6.

[71] *Journal*, Sept. 28, 1896, p. 1.

1,506,634, but this figure evidently included the circulation of the *Sunday Journal*, which then probably exceeded 600,000.[72]

The conflict with Spain has often been referred to as "Hearst's War," but this accusation is manifestly unjust in view of the activities of such newspapers at Pulitzer's *World*, Dana's *Sun*, Bennett's *Herald*, Medill's *Tribune*, and many less powerful publications in every corner of the nation. Pulitzer originally set the pace in exploiting the Cuban rebellion, only to be outstripped by Hearst and beaten at his own practice. As Oswald Garrison Villard so aptly expressed it:[73]

> . . . It was by this appeal to the basest passions of the crowd that Mr. Pulitzer succeeded; like many another he deliberately stooped for success, and then, having achieved it, slowly put on garments of righteousness. . . .

The sensational press had finally triumphed. Led by the *World* and *Journal*, partisan newspapers, after carefully arranging the stage for the final act in the drama of war propaganda "played up" the *Maine* explosion without restraint, and left the American public reeling from a bombardment of half-truths, misstatement of facts, rumors, and faked dispatches. Sensing the popular tide, a hesitant administration, egged on by a "jingo" Congress, was forced into a war with a nation already on the verge of collapse from internal strife and rebellion.

[72] *Ibid.*, Nov. 8, 1896, p. 1.

[73] Oswald Garrison Villard, *Some Newspapers and Newspapermen* (New York, 1923), pp. 44–45.